



## Forums

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### Overview

Forums are a powerful communication tool within eLearn. Think of them as online message boards where you and your students can post messages to each other.

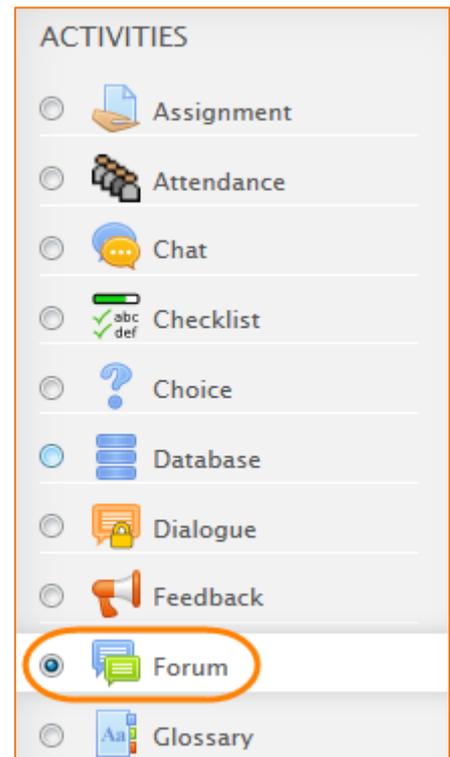
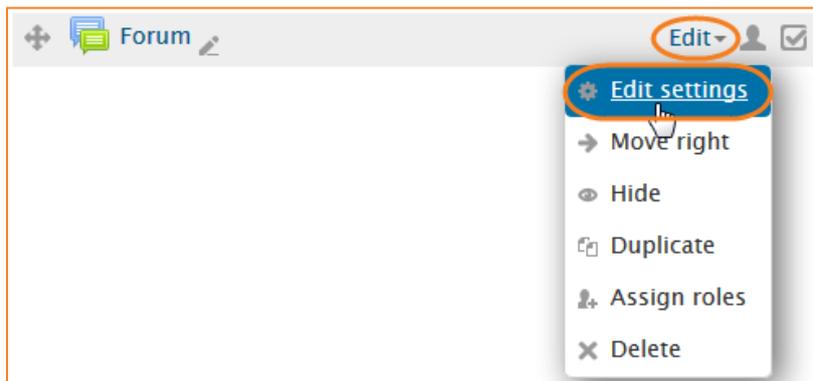
You might like to use an online discussion for:

- an icebreaker;
- to post a question for students to answer/discuss a topic;
- students to post a topic for other students can comment on;
- brainstorming;
- students to collect newspaper articles and students to comment on each other's articles.

## Adding or Editing a Forum in your course

1. Login to eLearn and open up the appropriate course. Once in this course, **Turn editing on** using the orange icon at the top right.
2. If creating a new forum, click on **Add an activity or resources** and choose **Forum**.
3. If editing an existing forum, locate the specific activity, select the **Edit** menu to the right and choose **Edit settings**. This will open up the settings page for the forum.

Turn editing on



# Settings

## General

### **Forum name**

A short name of the forum, which will be displayed on the course homepage.

### **Description**

Provide instructions for your students here so they are clear what they have to do. Click the icon top left to expand the toolbars drag the bottom right of the text box out to expand it.

### **Display description on course page**

Enabling this will display the description on the course page just below the link to the forum.

### **Forum type**

There are five forum types to choose from:

- **A single simple discussion** - A single topic discussion developed on one page, which is useful for short focused discussions (cannot be used with separate groups)
- **Standard forum for general use** - An open forum where anyone can start a new topic at any time; this is the best general-purpose forum
- **Each person posts one discussion** - Each person can post exactly one new discussion topic (everyone can reply to them though); this is useful when you want each student to start a discussion about, say, their reflections on the week's topic, and everyone else responds to these
- **Q and A Forum** - Instead of initiating discussions participants pose a question in the initial post of a discussion. Students may reply with an answer, but they will not see the replies of other Students to the question in that discussion until they have themselves replied to the same discussion.

- **Standard forum displayed in a blog-like format** - An open forum where anyone can start a new discussion at any time, and in which discussion topics are displayed on one page with "Discuss this topic" links

## Attachments and word count



▼ Attachments and word count

Maximum attachment size

Maximum number of attachments

Display word count

### **Maximum attachment size**

The maximum file size that may be attached to a forum post is 100MB. Teachers may want a smaller size limit for the forum.

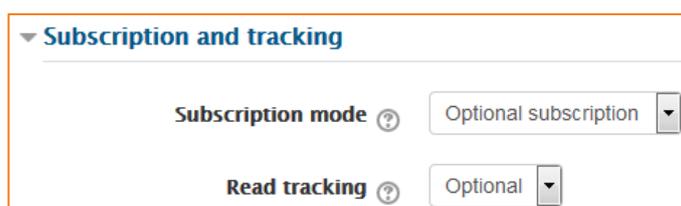
### **Maximum number of attachments**

The maximum number of attachments a user can add to their forum post (from 0 to 100) can be specified here.

### **Display word count**

If "Display word count" is enabled, then the number of words in forum posts will be shown at the bottom of each post.

## Subscription and tracking



▼ Subscription and tracking

Subscription mode

Read tracking

### **Subscription mode**

When a user is subscribed to a forum, it means that they will receive notification (via popup and/or email, depending on the user's messaging settings preferences) of each new posting. By default, posts are recorded about 30 minutes after the post was first written. Depending upon the email settings of each forum member, they may be sent an email not long after the 30 minute edit window is closed.

People can usually choose whether or not they want to be subscribed to each forum. However, the teacher can choose to force subscription on a particular forum, making all course users automatically subscribed, even those that enrol at a later time.

There are 4 subscription mode options:

- **Optional subscription** - Participants can choose whether to be subscribed
- **Forced subscription** - Everyone is subscribed and cannot unsubscribe
- **Auto subscription** - Everyone is subscribed initially but can choose to unsubscribe at any time
- **Subscription disabled** - Subscriptions are not allowed.

The subscription mode and subscribe or unsubscribe links appear in **Navigation** → **Forum administration** when viewing the forum. Teachers can quickly change the mode via the **Subscription mode** options and view the current subscribers via the **Show/edit current subscribers** link.

Tips:

- Forcing everyone to subscribe is especially useful in the News forum and in forums towards the beginning of the course (before everyone has worked out that they can subscribe to these emails themselves).
- Changing the setting from "Yes, initially" to "No" will not unsubscribe existing users; it will only affect those who enrol in the course in the future. Similarly changing "Yes, initially" will not subscribe existing course users but only those enrolling later.
- There is also a "Subscriptions not allowed" setting which prevents Students from subscribing to a Forum. Teachers may choose to subscribe to a forum if they wish.

### ***Read tracking for this forum?***

Read tracking for a forum allows users to track read and unread forum posts

There are two options for this setting:

- **Optional** - Students can turn tracking on or off for the forum via a link **Track / Don't track unread posts** in **Administration** → **Forum administration**, or via their **Profile** → **Forum Tracking** option.
- **Off** - It is not possible to track unread forum posts

## RSS



▼ RSS

RSS feed for this activity <sup>?</sup> None ▼

Number of RSS recent articles <sup>?</sup> 0 ▼

### ***RSS feed for this activity***

This turns RSS on or off for this forum. When set to “None,” RSS is disabled. When set to “Discussions,” the RSS feed will send out new discussions to subscribers. When set to “Posts,” the RSS feed will send out any new posts to subscribers.

### ***Number of RSS recent articles***

This number sets the number of articles that go out via RSS. If this number is set to 5, then the 5 most recent articles will be sent to subscribers. As new posts (or discussions) are added, the oldest post/discussion is replaced on the RSS feed. If your forum gets many posts every day, you will want to set this number high.

## Post threshold for blocking



▼ Post threshold for blocking

Time period for blocking <sup>?</sup> Don't block ▼

Post threshold for blocking <sup>?</sup> 0

Post threshold for warning <sup>?</sup> 0

### ***Time period for blocking***

Choose here the time period in which can be blocked from posting more than a given number of posts.

### ***Post threshold for blocking***

Set the number of posts here that users may add before they are blocked.

### ***Post threshold for warning***

Set the number of posts here after which users will be warned they are about to be blocked.

## Ratings

Forum posts can be rated using a scale. Any ratings given in the forum are recorded in the gradebook. The roles that can rate this feature cannot be changed.

### Aggregate type

You can set an aggregate type, in other words, decide how all the ratings given to posts in a forum are combined to form the final grade (for each post and for the whole forum activity).

- **Average of ratings (default)** - This is the mean of all the ratings given.
- **Count of ratings** - The counts the number of rated entries which becomes the final grade. This is useful when the number of posts is important. Note that the total cannot exceed the maximum grade allowed for the forum. A count may be used if the teacher simply wants to acknowledge that a reply was given in the case students being required to make a certain number of posts in a discussion. Note: Count of ratings does not work for the CIT eLearn scales due to the limitation imposed by the max grade.
- **Maximum rating** - The highest rating is returned as the final grade. This method is useful for emphasising the best work from participants, allowing them to post one high-quality post as well as a number of more casual responses to others.
- **Minimum rating** - The smallest rating is returned as the final grade. This method promotes a culture of high quality for all entries.
- **Sum of ratings** - All the ratings for a particular user are added together. Note that the total is not allowed to exceed the maximum grade for the forum. Note: Count of ratings does not work for the CIT eLearn scales due to the limitation imposed by the max grade.

### Scale

Select the type of grading used for this activity. If "scale" is chosen, you can then choose the scale from the "scale" dropdown. If using "point" grading, you can then enter the maximum grade available for this activity.

### ***Restrict ratings to items with dates in this range***

The teacher can allow only posts within a certain date range to be rated. This is useful if the teacher wants to keep students focused on the most recent content and maintain a specific pace within the forum or course.

### **Common module settings**

See eLearn guide – [Groups and Groupings](#).

### **Restrict access**

See eLearn guide – [Conditional Release](#).

### **Activity completion**

See eLearn guide – [Completion Tracking](#).

Once you have filled in all the require settings, click on ***Save and display*** to bring up the forum, or ***Save and return to course*** to go back to the course.

